

Falling Stars

by arian

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Summary: Rinoa's courage and strength are tested when a tragedy occurs. More than ever she needs to keep her sorceress ability under control.

1. Default Chapter Title

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Falling Stars.

By Arian

Author's note " Not a lot to say this time. This is my first attempt at writing properly about Squall and Rinoa. Well, mainly Rinoa. I have been remarkably restrained and I'm sure you'll all be pleased to hear that Laguna only gets a mention. He isn't in this story. *sob* That's right folks, Arian has finally managed to write a fic that isn't about Laguna (I told ya I could, Ryn!).

Well this is the usual bit I tack onto stories. I figured I'd put it on the beginning for a change, even though it gives away a few cluesâ€|

Though I can stand a thousand trials,

The strong will never fall,

But watching stars without you

My soul criesâ€|

Sorry if I got the lyrics a little wrong, this is from "I'm Kissing You"

Written by Des'ree and Tim Atack.

It was a monster that started it. Just one monster, that looked much

like an Elnoyle, but couldn't be. It was too tough, too impervious to everything they could throw at it.

Quistis sighed as she prepared another spell. Not even GF's or Limit Breaks had an effect.

She, Squall and Irvine had been out on a SeeD mission, just a simple case of scouting the land, when they had encountered the beast. It wasn't a mission important enough to warrant Squall's presence, but he got restless from time to time and wanted to get out of Garden.

Quistis watched, anxiety growing, as her spell made little impact. Even when they'd fought Ultemecia five years ago, that spell at least had an effect.

She turned her head to glance at Squall and realised he was preparing for his Limit Break. Lionheart was the only thing they hadn't yet tried.

Irvine winked at her as Squall ran forwards, a wink that told her "This'll do the trick" as surely as if he'd said the words.

Squall hacked at the monster, the blows finally doing some damage, but the beast, now enraged, twisted and swiped at Squall. Quistis watched in horror as it grabbed Squall in one paw, claws digging deeply into him.

"Quistis! Irvine! Run! Get the hell out of here!" He yelled, still tearing into the creature with his gunblade.

"Not likely, Squall." Irvine shouted back as he and Quistis ran forwards to help him. Before either of them could get a blow in, the creature slumped to the ground, already too severely injured from Squall's attack to survive. Quistis ran to where Squall had been thrown clear of the collapsed monster, terrified at the sight of the blood that flowed from his side.

"I gave you an order." He croaked. "Youâ€œ| you should have ran. You might've beenâ€œ|"

Quistis shook her head fiercely, her eyes filling with tears at the sight of her proud student reduced to this state.

"Irvine, get back to the Ragnarok. Get Selphie and Zell to fly it here so we can get Squall aboard." Her voice quavered as Irvine ran for help and Quistis tried to stop the blood that flowed from Squall's side, realising just how bad the wounds were. Her horrified eyes sought his and for a moment he looked like the small brown-haired child in the orphanage again. The child that everyone had left behind. The one who had sat silently in a corner, always alone.

"Quistis? I'm scared." He confided quietly.

"It's alright, Squall. It's going to be alright." She tried to reassure him, knowing that she was lying through her teeth.

"Rinoaâ€œ| tell Rinoaâ€œ|" he coughed heavily, and didn't finish the

sentence, his eyes starting to cloud over.

"Oh noâ€! Squall!" Quistis shook him desperately and some life seemed to seep back into him.

"Sis? Where are you? I'm frightened." He whispered, then his eyes closed.

Quistis stared for a moment, unable to believe what had happened.

"It's Ok, Squall. Ellone will take care of you." She managed through her tears, hoping that wherever he was, he could hear her. "Ellone will look after you now."

Five years had passed since the threat posed by Ultemecia had been removed from existence and too much had happened. The world had been peaceable for a while, but now Galbadia was at war with Timber again, over the issue of independence, and Esthar was in turmoil.

It had been believed by many in Garden that Esthar was stable. No one seemed to have any quarrel with the president and all had been well. Until a year ago.

It had started with Ellone. She had been quieter than usual and seemed upset â€“ she would never say to anyone what she was depressed about. Then, one morning, she had been found in Winhill, sat outside the house her parents had once lived in. No one would know now what had been the cause of her sadness. She had cut her wrists and her ever-present green stole was stained a deep crimson.

Squall had taken it badly, but learned to live with it, with the help of Rinoa. Laguna on the other hand, had done the one thing no one had ever expected him to do and simply vanished. Kiros and Ward had looked for him one morning and found that he had disappeared. Esthar was at a loss and, in desperation, the palace aides had offered the job to Kiros or to Ward. It was declined. Their loyalty had never been to the country itself, and they travelled, just as they had long ago, but this time they were searching for Laguna, if he was alive.

A new president had eventually been elected, but then different factions had arisen, all struggling for power. The rest of the world found it hard to keep up with just who was currently ruling the country, and it made them nervous. Esthar was the most technologically advanced country in the world and if it chose to attack, there was little that could be done in the way of defence.

Through the chaos, SeeD had flourished. They were requested from all over the world and Squall had done well in choosing which missions would be worthwhile. Laguna's disappearance had thrown him for a while, but they had never been close and in the aftermath of Ellone's death, Squall felt very little. There were no tears left.

Rinoa stood on the grass, not far from where Garden hovered, waiting for the Ragnarok to land.

She knew. She didn't know how she knew, but she did. She felt it when she had watched Squall leave, that morning. She had had a foreboding feeling that he would not return, but she had dismissed it without further thought. The feeling had intensified throughout the day and now she stood, waiting, and hoping that she had no reason to be so scared.

The wind blew through her hair as Esthar's flagship settled on the plain in front of her. One look at Quistis' blotched face, as she emerged from the ship, said it all.

"He's dead." Rinoa said quietly in a monotone, unable to comprehend it for a long moment.

Quistis nodded wordlessly and then explained what had happened as best as she could. "There was nothing we could do." She finished, but was interrupted by Rinoa's angry voice.

"You should have saved him! You should have done something!"

Zell, Selphie and Irvine had trailed slowly down after Quistis, all lacking their usual bounce.

"What did you want us to do?" Irvine asked softly. "I would've done anything to stop this."

"You should have died." Rinoa said coldly, anger boiling inside her, trying to block the grief. It shouldn't have happened, they should've done something more! "Even if all of you died, it'd be worth it if he lived. He was worth more than any of you! None of you could've done the things he did!"

Her friends accepted her accusations in silence, knowing that she was upset. She didn't mean it, they reassured themselves in the vaults of their minds, she's so distraught!

The words that echoed in Rinoa's mind gradually changed as she grew more and more angry. They should've done something! They didn't do anything to help him! They killed him! They murdered Squall. .

She had called upon her powers as a sorceress before she had even realised she'd done it. Her mind blank of any other thoughts, she lifted her hand and watched as her friends were obliterated. They never had a chance to realise what was going on. She caught a last glimpse of Quistis' despairing face as the fire swallowed her from view.

Rinoa stood stock still for a moment, beginning to realise how alone she was. She was more alone now than she'd ever been. Still clutching at straws, still needing to quench her anger, she lifted one hand and turned to face Garden. She watched passively as Garden, and all its inhabitants, flew to pieces. The blank expression on her face not changing as some few screams invaded her ears.

SeeD. SeeD caused the mission. She thought, her mind glossing over the fact that Squall had chosen to go out on the mission in the first

place_. SeeD killed Squall. I hate them. I hate them all._

The stars began to show as the sky darkened. Rinoa didn't notice. The sky seemed to have been dark for so long now. She was sat on the grass, the wreckage of Garden, forgotten, on the plain behind her. In front of her, the Ragnarok remained intact. Squall's body was in there. She knew that she'd have to do something about that soon, but she didn't want to see him like that. She couldn't stand her image of Squall being tainted by the sight of him, crushed like an insect.

Rinoa lifted her head and her eyes searched the stars for the answers. As she watched, one star parted from the rest and left a trail of light burning across the sky in its wake. Rinoa's eyes filled with tears as she remembered watching similar sights with Squall. They had even met under a shooting star, and now they must part under one.

She had no one, now. They had all fallen to her anger, or else they had fallen before today, to other tragedies. She had no one left, and yet, in spite of a deep sadness and remorse at what she had done to her friends, still the anger burned and it seemed to require more. There were many SeeDs still living. SeeD had killed Squall and must not be allowed to continue. SeeD was a false friend. They would all fall, eventually. She would make that happen. She would kill every one of them, if she could.

Her eyes fell back to the red metal of the Ragnarok. Shadow cast and doom laden it appeared, the cold fire of the stars making it all the more mysterious.

It was the most beautiful airship she'd ever seen, the most perfect of its kind, and it seemed to Rinoa that it was fitting for the role she had a mind for it to play.

She slowly raised herself to her feet and lifted one hand in front of her, watching as a fire grew from under the Ragnarok, turning it into an immense funeral pyre.

"Squall, why you? Squall!" She uttered his name, over and over, trying to find an answer she could comprehend. Her litany did not stop, or even slow, as the tall flames engulfed the Ragnarok and tears streamed down her face.

"Squall!" She continued to whisper as the flames reflected in her eyes and her tears.

In the sky above her, stars started to plummet like rain, their bright trails falling behind them, leaving only the memory of their once proud fire.

2. Default Chapter Title

> <meta name="ProgId"> Falling Stars

Falling Stars.

By Arian

The sorceress had risen quickly, unknown and unnamed. None saw her who were living. She moved swiftly across the continents, almost invisibly, striking down all SeeDs that crossed her path, and hunting down those that didn't.

Yet, still the years passed and SeeD remained in existence, despite her efforts, and they fought back. The never-ending war between SeeD and sorceress had been refuelled.

There were only a handful of SeeDs left, but they couldn't afford to sit and wait this war out. The longevity of sorceresses was well known. It was likely that she would live a lifetime much longer than any normal human.

Ultemecia, they named her, deriving the name from the word ultimate, because to confront her directly was suicide. She seemed to have no weaknesses. She was the ultimate enemy, the most powerful sorceress that had ever existed.

And so the fight continuedâ€!

The dark castle floated close to the ruins of a long deserted orphanage and the sorceress whom the world had come to know as Ultemecia stood at one of the many windows, looking down on the fields and the empty building below.

She had put the castle here for a reason, she knew that. There had been so many reasons, once, but too much time had passed and they were long forgotten. The orphanage had a meaning to her once, but now it was nothing more than a symbol of the memories she no longer possessed.

The SeeDs still flourished and it seemed she would never be rid of them. As soon as one group fell, another sprang up in their place. It did not soothe the anger, as it used to. It was no longer enough, even though the reason for the anger escaped her.

Her face looked coldly up. The stars were obscured by dark clouds and she found that she liked it better that way. Stars were treacherous. They too had meant something once. Now she remembered broken promises, but that was all.

Too many years had passed, years that had taken their toll on her features, but the anger had been far less generous. It had streaked her face with cruelty and that had changed her more than time ever could. She had lived too long. Nothing pleased her anymore, not even hunting down the SeeDs.

She tried to comfort herself with another thought. The final plan was underway. Time compression â€“ the total destruction of everything that had ever caused her pain would finally be brought about.

She had acquired a machine that could send her consciousness into the

past, the Junction Machine Ellone. Elloneâ€| that name echoed through her mind and she thought, for a moment, that she glimpsed the memory of a round-faced girl with short, brown hair. It seemed that the girl had the same power as the machine. While the machine could not send her far enough into the past to achieve time compression, she was sure that Ellone could.

So far, her forays into the past to search for Ellone had drawn a blank. Inhabiting the bodies of past sorceresses, she searched for the girl, but recently, she had been disturbed by one such possession. She had taken over the body of a young sorceress, with a face that seemed to scratch at her memory. The mind of the young sorceress seemed too familiar, too comfortable. She didn't like it, and had not possessed the girl for long. The ease with which she had fitted into the girl's mind still disturbed her.

There was another face that she had seen through the girl's eyes. It had also seemed uncomfortably familiar. A young man with floppy hair that seemed to fall constantly into his grey eyes. The sight caused her an unbearable pain, and it had confused her. Something in her memory had stirred at that sight, but she had been unable to reach through her madness to retrieve it.

The sorceress named Ultemecia sat high in her castle, having finally achieved time compression. She was waiting. SeeD would surely send a last ditch attempt to stop her.

The door swung open and she looked up. Six of them, but they were not from this time. They were from the past and there were two that she recognized. The young sorceress and the boy with the grey eyes. The sight rocked her and sent a tremor through her soul.

"SeeDâ€|" She muttered to herself. "SeeDâ€| SeeD." Her eyes traced the features of those that stood before her. "SeeD, SeeD, SeeD! Kurse all SeeDs! Swarming like lokusts across generations. You disgust me." As she spoke aloud, she realised for the first time that her speech was different. The pronunciation of words had changed over the years since her youth. She knew she hadn't always spoken like that.

"The world is on the brink of that ever-elusive time kompression. Insolent fools! Your vain krusade ends here, SeeDs. The price for your meddling is death beyond death." She continued on with her raving, watching as the strange SeeDs readied themselves for battle.

Letting her eyes travel across their features one more time, she attacked.

Not long into the battle, she realised that they were stronger than she had originally thought. Her hand absently reached up to the ring that hung on a chain around her neck. Griever. Her one GF, but the most powerful she had ever seen. He would deal with these children that thought to stop her!

"Griever! Make them bleed!" She watched from a distance as the GF fought, but was eventually thrown back, weakened and fatigued. Junctioning herself to him, she continued to fight, beginning to realise that there was a little more to these SeeDs than they let

on.

As she cast another spell, she felt a peculiar feeling of dÃ©jÃ vu. This was wrong. It was too familiar, tooâ€œ! Her concentration lapsed as she lost herself in those thoughts and it gave the past SeeDs just the chance they needed. Griever was sent reeling, disintegrating as she watched, and her own form was too battered to be of any use. It hindered her.

Releasing herself from her mortal form, she revealed the empty shell she had become.

"I am Ultemecia." She spoke softly, in a monotone. "Time shall compressâ€œ! All existence denied." None of you will survive. Finally, I will have my way and all SeeDs will perish!

She lifted her hand to cast Hell's Judgement as the SeeDs relentlessly attacked. Even as they fought, the young SeeD with the grey eyes stirred her memory. His gaze seemed to bore holes through her. For a brief moment, she thought she remembered a magnificent airship, shaped like a dragon, with fire crawling up the red metal of its body.

Did the boy remember it too? Was it something he had seen as well? Why did she connect it with him?

She looked into his mind, skimming through his thoughts to find what she was looking for, but she did not see the flaming airship.

"Reflect on yourâ€œ! childhood." She prompted, hoping to see the fire that she remembered in his thoughts. "Your sensationsâ€œ! your wordsâ€œ! your emotions."

She saw a frown crinkle his face, as she cast yet another spell, but in his mind she still did not see what she had been looking for. She wished her own memory was not so walled up, then she would know what the image meant. The passing years had robbed her of her memories and she suddenly realised just how old she was.

"Timeâ€œ!" She said sadly. "It will not wait. No matter how hard you hold on, it escapes you." She paused. "Andâ€œ!"

The sorceress trailed off when the boy attacked. As he ran forwards, and swung the gunblade down, she looked closely into his grey eyes and the locked doors in her mind came tumbling open.

She knew the relevance of that flaming airship now. A million other pictures flooded into her mind in a instant. A shooting star, a ballroom and a reluctant dance. A field of flowers. A balcony, birds flying past her and the white swells of waves below.

She remembered this exact same scene, only from a different point of view. Her eyes sought the younger version of herself whose hand had unconsciously reached up to the ring that hung suspended on a chain around her neck. Rinoa, who had become known by a different name, braced herself. She knew now how this fight would end. She had seen it all before.

The gunblade tore deeply into her flesh and she knew that she was

dying. She didn't need her new knowledge of the outcome of this fight to know that. She could feel it.

She looked up into the cold face of the wielder of the blade.
Squall! Squallâ€| I always said it would be you. I always said it would be alright, just so long as it was you, and nobody elseâ€|

She didn't have enough left in her for words and, try as she might, she just couldn't sound his name. Then everything blacked out.

She walked through the blackness for what seemed an eternity, unable to rest and unable to slow her pace. She was tired and she was as good as dead, but the sorceress powers within her pulled her onwards. She had to pass them on to somebody.

The blackness abruptly ended and she found herself in the orphanage on Centra. It was not the shabby ruin she remembered, though. This was an earlier time, beyond her memory of the place. In front of her she saw Squall and Edea talking. When he saw her, Squall spun around and drew the gunblade. That single action hurt her deeper than any of the wounds she had sustained from the battle.

She walked slowly forwards, wishing she had the strength left to speak to Squall, but the little energy she had could only be spent on one objective.

"Iâ€| can't disappear yetâ€|" She choked out, addressing Edea but her arms reached out longingly towards Squall.

She was conscious of Edea saying something, but Rinoa couldn't make out individual words anymore. She was beyond that.

A relief, tinged with despair, filled her as Edea willingly stepped forwards. Releasing her powers, Rinoa slumped to the ground, aware that she had continued a chain of events that should never have started. A chain of events she knew all too well.

_So you never knewâ€| _Her last thoughts spun in circles in her mind. _You never knew this was me, Squallâ€| Perhaps if you'd known, you would never have been able to do your job as well as you did. My knightâ€| And a knight's duty is to protect a sorceress from herself. To stop her from falling off the edge of sanity. â€|And to put an end to her, if that should ever happenâ€|_

Rinoa's mind sank gratefully into the darkness as Squall watched, unaware of her identity, and she knew no more.

The End.

Ok, please don't all go and hurl yourselves off cliffs or anythingâ€| (Leave that to Laguna! *snigger*) I know this is quite a depressing story, I mean, everyone dies, or has some major tragedy, but it all fits so well! That's the scary thing! I don't really think that Rinoa is Ultemecia, but it does all add up, if you look at it that wayâ€| Oh, apologies for cutting the battles really short, but I'm not much of an action writer and you all know what a fight looks like

so I figured you could put some effort in and use your imaginations. Honestly, you can't expect me to do everything. Yeah, and I know I changed some of the dialogue from the game. It just worked better this way. I tried to stick to the original stuff but I ended up digging myself into the most enormous hole!

That's all for now! Go and read something to cheer yourselves up! Probably something with Selphie inâ€|*shudder*

End
file.